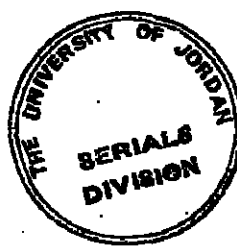


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Israel protests sale of F-15s to Saudis

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel protested Sunday at U.S. President George Bush's plans to sell up to 72 F-15 warplanes to Saudi Arabia. "The government of Israel objects to the sale of weapons, and certainly sophisticated weaponry, to an Arab country at war with Israel," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government said in a statement. "Israel has brought and will bring this position to the knowledge of those in power and the public in the United States," it added. The White House said the sale, announced Friday, would provide more than 40,000 American aerospace jobs. Israel said it would also accelerate the Middle East arms race. Mr. Bush's political opponents accused him of only trying to boost his sagging reelection hopes but the president insisted he was concerned about the stability of the Middle East. He said he had considered the defence needs of Saudi Arabia and its relationship with Washington plus the need to safeguard Israel's edge. "I have worked on this issue personally, touching every base, and I am now satisfied that we have adequately addressed each of these concerns and that we can, and indeed must for our own interest, go forward with this sale," Mr. Bush told workers at the McDonnell-Douglas Corporation factory in St. Louis which makes the F-15.

Ethiopian Jews demand end to discrimination

TEL AVIV (R) — Ethiopian Jewish immigrants accused Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government Sunday of discriminating against them and demanded full equality with other Israelis. At a rare news conference to publicize the community's plight, a group of immigrants said 70 Ethiopian newcomers had committed suicide in the last two years because the government failed to meet their needs. "The movement of Ethiopian Jews demands the government of Israel and the chief rabbis recognize Ethiopian Jews as Jews in every respect," said Chairman Gobeze Achene. Ethiopian activists have staged a two-week-long vigil outside Mr. Rabin's office to win recognition of their religious leaders known as "kessim" and to push for adequate housing, schools and jobs (see page 2). Mr. Rabin met the kessim Sunday hours after the Ethiopians criticized him for ignoring their problems. But there was no resolution. The activists demanded an immediate end to practices they view as systematic segregation and discrimination.

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Jordan, Syria to clash in basketball

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Sunday beat Tunisia 103-73 in the semifinals of the Arab basketball tournament of the Seventh Pan-Arab Games in Syria to qualify for the finals against Syria Monday.

Lira devalued

BRUSSELS (R) — The Italian lira was devalued Sunday against all other currencies in the European Monetary System (EMS) currency grid, at the request by Italy and Germany, a European Community (EC) statement said. The statement said also the powerful Bundesbank would cut its official rates Monday.

Tunisians vote in by-elections

TUNIS (R) — Tunisians voted Sunday in two parliamentary by-elections boycotted by the opposition. The only candidates in the regions of Monastir and Kébili were from the ruling Democratic Constitutional Assembly (RCD) party which holds all the other seats in the 141-member chamber of deputies. In preparation for a general election expected for 1994, the six parties in the legal opposition are discussing with the government the revision of the present electoral law which favours the RCD.

Sudanese children march in support of Somali peers

KHARTOUM (AP) — Tens of thousands of Sudanese children marched in the capital Khartoum Sunday in solidarity with their peers in nearby Somalia who are starving. The children, aged between seven and 13 and dressed in school uniforms, gathered at a main square outside of Khartoum and prayed to God for the "salvation of our brothers" in Somalia. Thousands of children are among the more than 100,000 Somalis who already have died from the combined effects of drought and warfare and thousands more are estimated to be dying daily.

Israel and Gambia renew relations

TEL AVIV (AP) — Gambia renewed diplomatic ties with Israel Sunday, the 15th black African state to do so since the mass rupture of relations nearly 20 years ago. Gambia, a predominantly Islamic West African nation, was among some 30 African states that broke ties with Israel shortly after the 1973 Middle East war. The renewal of ties capped a three-day visit by Gambian Foreign Minister Ousay Sey. He and his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, discussed Israeli agricultural assistance to Gambia.

Yemeni arrested with Egyptian drugs

CAIRO (R) — A man who had snuffed 200 kilograms of Egyptian government-subsidized drugs into suitcases for resale in Yemen was arrested as he tried to board a plane for Sanaa, Cairo airport seizures said Sunday. The man and his pharmacist father had secured Egyptian permits for the drugs, including medications for heart patients and diabetics, and planned to sell them in Yemen where they are much more expensive.

Iran pardons 800 prisoners

NECOSIA (R) — Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pardoned 1,834 prisoners Sunday in an amnesty marking the birthday of Prophet Mohammad. Tehran Radio said the inmates were serving jail terms for a variety of crimes. Fifty-three of those pardoned were clergymen convicted by special tribunals.

Kurdish rebels kill four soldiers

AGRI, Turkey (AP) — Turkish-Kurdish insurgents killed four soldiers in this eastern province, the semi-official Anatolia news agency said Sunday. Separatist guerrillas fired on a patrol Saturday evening in the town of Dogubeyazit, the agency said.

Focus on Israel and Syria as bilaterals resume today

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Middle East peace talks resume Monday with the focus firmly on Israel and Syria after a week in which they exchanged positive signals and seemed to prepare the ground for more progress. After a 10-day recess, the parties — Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestinians — came together to complete their sixth round of talks since they first met around a table at last year's historic Madrid peace conference. The negotiations are scheduled to end on Sept. 24.

The talks have already confounded predictions of observers and even some participants, who expected most progress to occur in the Israeli-Palestinian talks on self-rule for the 1.75 million inhabitants of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Instead, while those talks moved slowly, separate Israeli-Syrian discussions emerged as the most promising avenue for progress. Analysts and diplomats expect that trend to be confirmed in the next two weeks.

"The new Israeli government is ready, willing and able to move ahead as fast as the Syrians are willing to move," said Martin Indyk, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad had been exchanging signals in the past week indicating they were ready to do business.

The most dramatic gesture came from Mr. Rabin who said three times that in exchange for full peace he was willing to seek "territorial compromise" on the occupied Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war. "This made explicit what Israel had been suggesting in coded diplomatic language. But it was an abrupt change for a leader who had insisted that Israel needed to retain control of all of the strategic plateau to ensure its 'security'."

"In exchange for a peace treaty that promises an end to war and opens the borders between Syria and Israel, diplomatic relations and normalisation, Israel is ready to implement (U.N. resolutions) 242 and 338," Mr. Rabin said. "This implies of course some sort of territorial compromise." Officials in Damascus quoted Mr. Assad last Wednesday as saying Syria wanted every inch of the Heights in any peace pact. "Syria will never give concessions on its land and rights," he said. Mr. Assad told 200 Golan Druze, the first group allowed to cross into Syria since the 1967 war. But he added: "We want the peace of a courageous people, the real peace ... which guarantees the interests of all."

Arab League assails Iran over islands, rejects division of Iraq

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Arab League and Egypt Saturday threw their full weight behind the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in its dispute with Iran over sovereignty of three islands. The Arab League also called for preserving Iraq's independence, its territorial integrity, unity of its people and non-interference in its internal affairs. Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid told reporters at the end of Saturday's session that the resolution on Iraq was taken after reviewing the dangers that could result from interfering in that country's internal affairs. He said the UAE-Iran dispute over the islands was added to the council's agenda Saturday. Egypt and a number of Arab countries fear that restricting the control of the Iraqi government over its territories in the north and south would in effect divide that country into three states and help Iran spread its political influence and its version of Islam in the area.

"Standing besides the United Arab Emirates in holding on to full sovereignty of the Abu Musa Island, and giving total support to all measures it takes to assure its sovereignty over the island, is an important issue," Dr. Abdul Meguid told the opening session. Dr. Abdul Meguid was speaking at the biannual meeting of Arab League foreign ministers. The meeting was attended by 10 foreign ministers and 11 ministers of state and permanent representatives of the members. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warned Iran that it could not expect to improve its relations with Gulf Arab states if it imposed its will by force over control of Abu Musa. "I don't understand how Iran can use force to usurp this island or any other island... this is unfortunate and sad," he said in an interview with the newspaper Al Ahram. The Abu Musa dispute flared last month when Iran, which maintains a garrison on the island, turned back a boatload of foreigners, most of them employed by the UAE. Gulf Arab foreign ministers, supported by Egypt and Syria, condemned the action last week as a violation of UAE sovereignty. "This logic opens the door for foreign interventions and raises fears of increased Iranian ambition to dominate the UAE and other Gulf Arab states," Mr. Mubarak told Al Ahram. The Tehran newspaper Jomhuri Islami said on Sunday that the row over Abu Musa was "artificial" and had been whipped up as propaganda by the United States but it surprised to see Syria "treating the same 'artificial' issue as Washington's satellite sheikdoms."

On Saturday the same newspaper warned Gulf Arabs that their talk of historic claims could backfire badly. "If history were the criterion, it would prove Iran's sovereignty over vast parts of Iraq... even main outside Iraqi air space. The estimated 60,000 troops Iraq has on the ground below the 32nd Parallel remain dispersed, Gen. Nelson said. But he noted that construction continues on a causeway expected to give the army greater access to the marshes, a watery jungle of reeds and papyrus covering some 15,500 square kilometres of southern Iraq. "I presume they're still conducting some counterinsurgency operations," the general said. But he stressed: "I'm not seeing a huge identifiable buildup on the ground."

Flights by Iraqi warplanes north of the 32nd parallel appeared to be routine and so far there had been no unusual military buildup on the ground in the area itself, he said. "At this moment there isn't anything that has happened that has made my heart stop," Gen. Nelson said. British pilots who fly ground reconnaissance missions say the causeway which Iraq is building across its marshes to give military vehicles better access is one third complete. That does not include flights by AWACS or tankers, which re-

of peace talks in Madrid last October. Some diplomats believe expectations have been raised to a dangerous level and the actual talks will be an anti-climax if it becomes clear there are no dramatic breakthroughs. Mr. Rabin said he was not ready to start discussing specifics of withdrawal until he heard from Syria it was ready for a full peace treaty and normal relations with Israel. An Arab diplomat in Washington said Mr. Rabin and Mr. Assad had been testing each other's real desire for peace. Once Mr. Assad decided a deal was possible, he would move slowly but steadily towards it. Israeli negotiators flew to Washington Sunday, leaving behind a raging debate over whether Israel should return the Heights. As thousands of protesters gathered outside the airport to oppose Mr. Rabin's offer of "territorial concessions," Itamar Rabinovich led his Israeli team aboard a commercial flight to the United States early Sunday. "I believe that within a week we will give the Syrians a document ... if the Syrians respond to it the way we believe they ought to, it's possible to begin speaking of consolidating a joint document of principles," Mr. Rabinovich said in an interview broadcast

(Continued on page 5)



Jordan heads for Moscow meeting stressing goal of arms-free region

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's delegation to the second meeting of the working group on regional disarmament left for Moscow Sunday stressing that the Kingdom's ultimate objective was a "weapons-free" Middle East. Jordan's approach to regional disarmament is an insistence that all countries in the Middle East endorse the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and all other international conventions banning biological and chemical weapons, said Abdullah Toukan, head of the delegation. Dr. Toukan noted that the discussions, which are part of the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace process launched in Madrid last October, remain in a "seminar format" and the outcome of the deliberations would "reinforce and complement" the bilateral peace talks between Israel and the Arabs. "We hope to learn from the experiences (in the disarmament

field) of other regions in the world such as Europe and South-East Asia and come up with ideas, means and modalities to apply the concept in the Middle East," Dr. Toukan told the Jordan Times shortly before the departure of the delegation. "Jordan, which always believed and behaved itself as a member of the international civilised community, bases its approach on an insistence that all countries in the region endorse and commit themselves to all international treaties on weapons of mass destruction, including the NPT and the existing and proposed conventions on biological and chemical weapons," Dr. Toukan said. "These are all non-negotiable issues; the endorsement of these treaties and conventions by all countries is a must," said Dr. Toukan. "Our ultimate objective is to see a weapons-free Middle East. Regional security and stability depend not only on the total elimination of weapons of mass

destruction but also an end to all forms of research for weapon development," Dr. Toukan added, renewing a call for a total ban on the supply of technology and assistance to Middle Eastern countries to develop arms. Israel refuses to confirm or deny whether it possesses nuclear arms but maintains that it will not be the first to introduce atomic weapons to the Middle East. It has not endorsed the NPT, which makes it conditional on signatory countries to open their nuclear facilities for international inspection. Dr. Toukan stressed that the working group on Middle East disarmament could turn effective in the regional peace process only after the bilateral Arab-Israeli peace negotiations make substantial progress towards resolving the basic issues at the core of the conflict — Israel's occupation of Arab territory, the problem of displaced Palestinians and water disputes. (Continued on page 5)

Destruction of crops unrelated to Saudi ban — Kavar

By Laney Salisbury
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Water and Irrigation Minister Samir Kavar said Sunday that a Cabinet decision to destroy fruits and vegetables grown in areas irrigated with polluted water from the main recycling plant of Khirbat Al Samra was unrelated to Saudi Arabia's ban of Jordanian produce.

Dr. Kavar told the Jordan Times that Saturday night's Cabinet decision was "a safety measure only and the ministry of agriculture has taken lots of vegetables and plants for lab testing."

He said that vegetables produced on land from the Khirbat Al Samra area to King Talal Dam was not exported and served the local community. Dr. Kavar said it has been known for at least 14 months that water from the plant was polluted with human waste but it remained unclear if produce had been contaminated. Dr. Kavar is one of five ministers on an advisory council that recommended the Cabinet to advise farmers to destroy their crops and switch to trees and plants for animal feed. The committee's chairman, Agriculture Minister Faysal Khasawneh, could not be reached for details on the committee's study of the area, how many farmers are affected and where exactly their produce is sold. Dr. Kavar said that because of water contamination, produce from the area may not be fit for human consumption and the land should only be used for "controlled agriculture," which includes such products as sugar beet, trees and produce must be boiled and peeled. For the past three weeks, Saudi (Continued on page 5)

Calls gain momentum for reforms in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — A leading Iraqi journalist has urged passage of a national law guaranteeing freedom of the press and called for a multi-party system. Mudhith Arif, editor-in-chief of Al Rafaidin weekly political magazine, also called for a national referendum on Iraq's new constitution, saying that democracy would counter allied aggression against Iraq. "We are in need of a political movement just as swift as the current reconstruction drive in our country which started immediately after the Gulf war," Mr. Arif said in a commentary in Babil newspaper. Babil is published by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, who also publishes Al Rafaidin. Mr. Arif's commentary was similar to a recent statement by a group of Iraqi intellectuals. The commentaries come at a

time when Baghdad is trying to muster support in face of allied intervention on behalf of Shiite Muslim rebels in southern Iraq. Several days ago, Uday himself, writing under a pen name, also called for more democracy in Iraq and greater efforts to improve the lives of people in the south. The United States, Britain and France have imposed a "no-fly" zone over the southern third of the country, saying it is necessary to protect Shiite Muslims from attacks by the Iraqi government. Iraq denies repressing the Shiites and has been publicising efforts to win the support of southern tribes and to improve water systems, schools and other public services. The nightly television news Saturday showed Defence Minister Ali Hassan Al Majid visiting the southern city of Nasiriyah, meeting heads of tribes and party officials.

Referring to the allied "no-fly" zone, he said: "The current situation has made it necessary for everyone to make extraordinary efforts in order to foil the British, U.S. and French conspiracy." Some tribal leaders and intellectuals recited poems lauding President Saddam's leadership and condemning the allies. Mr. Arif's column also called for more democracy. "The best way to repulse foreign aggressors and reactionary activities inside the country is to expand democracy and balance economic and social demands among all provinces," he wrote. A press freedom law has been discussed by the government and ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party but has not been adopted by the National Assembly. Mr. Arif said President Saddam many times has called for more democracy. The country took steps towards opening up its

political system right after the Gulf war when, devastated by allied bombing, it sought desperately to lift the economic embargo imposed after its invasion of Kuwait. There has been considerable retrenchment since President George Bush and British Prime Minister John Major said the sanctions would remain as long as President Saddam remained in power and called for his overthrow. The assembly has approved a law providing for a multi-party system. Mr. Arif complained the law still is not workable and called for removing obstacles to its implementation. (Continued on page 5)

Assad, Hrawi to meet again

DAMASCUS (R) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi ended two days of talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Sunday with agreement to meet again after a new government takes office in Beirut on the basis of controversial elections. Syrian presidential spokesman Jonbarrat Kourieh said Mr. Assad pledged support for the "national reconciliation process" in Lebanon but there was no word on whether they discussed a withdrawal of Syrian troops from the Beirut area. Mr. Kourieh told Reuters: "President Hafez Al Assad reiterated Syria's support for the Lebanese national reconciliation process and for Lebanese efforts to deal with current issues within the spirit of this charter (the Taif agreement)."

Allies may cut 'no-fly' zone monitoring flights

ABOARD USS LASALLE (Agencies) — Patrols over southern Iraq could drop to AWACS radar surveillance planes and less than 40 fighters sorties a day if Iraqi air and ground operations remain quiet, a U.S. air force general said Sunday. "As long as we have good eyes, our arms can be at our sides momentarily," Lieutenant General Mike Nelson, the air force commander in the region, told reporters on board this U.S. navy command ship. He said there had been no confirmed attempts by the Iraqis to fly into the air exclusion zone south of the 32nd Parallel. He stressed that Iraqi military operations against Shiite Muslim rebels in the southern marshlands were low-level, much as they have been since the "no-fly" zone went into effect Aug. 27. Planes from the American navy and the U.S. British and French air forces fly between 40 and 60 sorties over Iraq on an average day, down from more than 100 daily in the initial phase of the operation. That does not include flights by AWACS or tankers, which re-

main outside Iraqi air space. The estimated 60,000 troops Iraq has on the ground below the 32nd Parallel remain dispersed, Gen. Nelson said. But he noted that construction continues on a causeway expected to give the army greater access to the marshes, a watery jungle of reeds and papyrus covering some 15,500 square kilometres of southern Iraq. "I presume they're still conducting some counterinsurgency operations," the general said. But he stressed: "I'm not seeing a huge identifiable buildup on the ground."

Afghan buffer force pushes out warring rivals

KABUL (R) — A neutral Afghan buffer force has pushed government forces and rival disaffected Hezb-e-Islami fighters out of positions to the south of Kabul to try to bring lasting peace to the battered city, a commander said Sunday. "We have taken over the positions of the government and Hezb-e-Islami," provincial commander Haji Hayat Khan said. "There was no problem, no violence."

Underlining the danger posed by thousands of undisciplined Mujahadeen roaming Kabul, one fighter standing nearby suddenly fired his gun at the ground by mistake, shooting himself in the foot. He was taken to hospital. The 5,000-strong buffer force around the city has begun removing posters of rival Mujahadeen leaders including Hezb chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to reduce factional clashes. The force has been mobilised from provinces across Afghanistan to try to end the faction fighting that erupted in Kabul since the Mujahadeen took power from the former communist government in late April. Last month the fighting in Kabul killed 2,000 people and injured 9,000. Another commander said the force was essential to ensure peace after 14 years of civil war in Afghanistan.

"If you left (Defence Minister Ahmad Shah) Masood and Hekmatyar to themselves they would never remove their militia of their own choice," he said. "But, with pressure from all sides they will have to do so." The main condition of the ceasefire is the removal and disbandment of formerly communist militia now absorbed into the army and demobilisation of ex-communist soldiers who sided with Mr. Hekmatyar after the government fell. However, the buffer force of men from various provinces and the many different Mujahadeen parties is itself riven by bickering, said one senior commander who declined to be named. Mujahadeen commanders, senior Muslim clergy and elders from across Afghanistan last week started to prepare a council to choose a future government and vowed to go to any lengths to

secure a lasting peace in Kabul. Some 2,500 elders, clergy and commanders representing 16 provinces met in Ghazni, 100 kilometres south of Kabul, from Wednesday to Friday to find a formula to end the fighting. The delegates gave their backing to the peace team from 10 provinces that negotiated last month's ceasefire between Hezb and the Islamic government. The 16 provinces will send fighters to reinforce the buffer force. The delegates agreed that if either side violated the ceasefire they would turn their guns on the aggressor. They decided 1,000 people — commanders, clergy, elders, Afghans living abroad and representatives of all provinces — should gather in a shura, or traditional council, in late October to decide the composition of the future government.

Sanctions take their toll in Iraqi children, changing lives

By Victoria Graham
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — At Mansour Children's Hospital, the beds are filled with wasted and ailing children, cradled and suckled by exhausted mothers whose milk is nearly gone.

Many of these children will die and the mothers will return to the hospital with their skeletal brothers and sisters as the hardship caused by two-year-old U.N. sanctions bites to the very bones of Iraqis' lives.

Kholia Ali, a peasant's wife, brought her shrivelled, three-year-old son Amar to Iraq's premier pediatric institution because she knows he will get some food and treatment here for a few days.

At home he only gets gruel, soup, cow's milk and biscuits, all the family can afford amid the shortages and skyrocketing prices.

Nearby, baby Wafa Abdul Kareem is dying of a liver obstruction, but the hospital cannot get X-rays and

radioactive isotopes for a liver scan.

The hospital has sent her home to die several times before, but her labourer father keeps sending her back, hoping for a miracle.

Hospital director Rafah Salam Aziz said: "Many times it's easier for a family to let a baby die rather than let the whole family go hungry and get sick."

"Often there's nothing we can do. We cannot save their lives. We only can ease the pain," she said.

If the child patients do improve in the hospital, they go home to the poverty that is afflicting more and more of Iraq's 17 million people.

The children again go hungry and, if they survive, are returned to the hospital for help.

Doctors are treating acute malnutrition because economic sanctions have made food scarce and costly. Humanitarian aid from U.N. and other agencies gets through, but it is a trickle.

Doctors are inundated with cases of gastroenteritis and

other water-borne diseases because chlorine cannot be imported for drinking water systems damaged by Gulf war bombing. Chlorine could be used to make chemical weapons.

Cannulas, tubes for intravenous feeding, are in short supply, often one per child, taped to their heads. When drugs are in short supply, Dr. Aziz said, doctors must make grim choices about who can be saved and how to allocate resources — whether to give precious drugs to dying children, or to those with a chance?

President George Bush says that the sanctions, imposed initially to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait, will not be lifted while Saddam Hussein remains in power.

There is no sign of him stepping down, or being toppled, so there's no end in sight for Iraq's ordeal.

"Sanctions are killing the young, the poor and the elderly, our weakest people," Dr. Aziz said. "It makes us angry to see our children dying. For what?"

"I know the American people have emotions, like us. They feel for others. If they really knew what was happening, they'd want it to stop."

Except for the wealthy elite, almost everyone in Iraq is adversely affected by the sanctions.

They are having to eat less meat or none at all, take extra jobs where there are any, sell their possessions, even pets.

Fahria, a 22-year-old middle class woman, says that although she has been married for almost two years, she does not want to have a baby, not yet, because of the sanctions.

"It's hard to find enough baby formula, even if you can afford it, and there's not enough medicine even if you can pay," she said. "It's better to wait for better times."

At the Sak Asani, the Friday book market, where books are spread on the sidewalk, retired teacher Abu Hassan says he is thinking of parting with several cherished volumes of Koranic

teachings that have been in the family for generations.

"I hate to do this, but I may have to," he said. "It's just that some things shouldn't be turned into money. It's hard to put these books on the ground beside cheap novels."

Sahli Khalaf Nasser, who's been in the book business for 45 years, has had to sell some of his wife's gold jewelry, necklaces and bangles "so we can live. It makes us both very sad, but what can we do?"

At the Nidal Street flea market on Fridays, families bring stereos, silverware, tricycles, grumpy, well-lugged stuffed animals, carpets, wedding beds, television sets, samovars, family heirlooms, even live parakeets to sell.

Hala Jaber Mohammad, a widow with four children, only had pots and pans, dishes and plastic cups, and her trusty "babylon" treadle sewing machine.

"I need money for food," she sobbed. "Life has become horribly difficult."

Japan reticent about possible military action against Iraq

TOKYO (AP) — As U.S. jets zoom across the southern skies of Iraq to enforce the allied "no-fly zone," Japan is quietly fidgeting over the prospects of renewed hostilities in the Gulf.

Japan is still licking its wounds from the Gulf war, when it was widely chastised for its sluggish response to the allied battle against Iraq.

As the United States' major ally in Asia, Japan says it is determined to quickly support all United Nations resolutions on Iraq to ensure such criticism does not surface again.

It immediately said it would comply with a new U.N. plan to seize Iraqi assets that were frozen two years ago after the invasion of Kuwait.

But Tokyo also says it is against the use of military force against Iraq.

"Japan is not interested in toppling (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein's regime," says Akio Shiota, a foreign ministry official responsible for policy towards Iraq. "We do not think military action is needed now against Iraq, and we do not foresee such a situation developing in the near future."

Tensions have intensified since the United States, Britain and France imposed a "no-fly zone" in southern Iraq late last month.

Japan approves of the plan but cannot participate because of its constitutional ban on using force to settle international disputes.

"Japan cannot be like the United States, England and France and threaten to shoot down Iraqi planes," says Shiochi Nakagawa, a lawmaker of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who would like to see Tokyo have a higher international profile.

"Only America can do what it is doing in Iraq."

Instead, Japan has been working behind the scenes to ease tensions by playing unofficial mediator. Mr. Shiota says the role is "neither spectacular nor dramatic but may be actually most significant."

Every week, Mr. Shiota has been meeting Iraqi officials in Tokyo to convince them of the international pressures against them. The dialogues are so frequent the Iraqis "consider the ministry guest room their second

office in Tokyo," Mr. Shiota said with a smile.

Clearly, the Japanese government would prefer a peaceful settlement of the dispute, knowing that it would be difficult to drum up public support for another allied military operation and reach a quick consensus on how to respond, leaving Tokyo open to renewed criticism.

During the Gulf crisis, many Japanese opposed the hard-line stance against Baghdad adopted by the United States.

It is not only the oil in the Gulf that causes resource-poor Japan anxiety about military conflict in the region. Pacific groups, which are extremely influential among the intelligentsia because of widespread remorse about Japan's role in World War II, loudly protest what they view as unnecessary U.S. sabre rattling.

"I question what the United States has achieved by the Gulf war... and what point there will be in ousting Saddam Hussein because that will not ensure human rights or a parliamentary government in Iraq," says Islamic expert Junya Shimoda.

Sudan relief supplies resumed aboard barges

KENYA (AP) — The United Nations Sunday said it had sent barges along rivers in Sudan's south to deliver emergency relief food to 300,000 people fleeing the country's protracted civil war.

The Rome-based World Food Programme (WFP) said three barges carrying 1,800 tonnes of food, shelter material and fuel Saturday left the town of Kosti, 275 kilometres south of Khartoum.

The agency, in a statement delivered to news organisations in Nairobi, said that over the next 10 days, the barges would deliver 1,560 tonnes to Malakal and Nadiar, on the White Nile River in Upper Nile province. The remaining 240 tonnes was destined for Nasir, on the Sobat River, a Nile tributary.

The statement said another convoy would follow soon with 3,000 tonnes of food destined for another 14 locations along the Sobat River.

"More and more people are still pushing their way up south of Sudan to the Sobat area to flee the most destructive war ever witnessed in Sudan," the WFP statement said.

Insecurity halted river and road shipments to the Sobat region in March after the WFP had delivered some 1,300 tonnes of food since January.

The United Nations says up to one million people in southern Sudan are threatened with starvation mainly due to the fighting between government troops and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Hundreds of thousands have been displaced by the fighting, including tens of thousands who have fled to refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Since the fighting erupted in 1983, hundreds of thousands have died from the combined effects of warfare and drought.

On Friday, Catherine Bertini, the WFP director, said "a situation of dramatic suffering is unfolding in Sudan" due to intensified fighting.

Thousands of people in the region urgently need food and medicine, Ms. Bertini said.

The WFP says it needs 41,000 tonnes to help the 300,000 people. Also needing help, it said, were 225,000 fresh arrivals in the western provinces of Darfur and Kordofan.

U.N. gives Iran 1 week to explain arms airlift

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Security Council's sanctions committee has given Iran one week to explain how an Iranian Jumbo Jet loaded with weapons made its way to Yugoslavia in violation of an international arms embargo.

An Iranian opposition group said Saturday that Tehran has been sending Bosnia-Herzegovina for months.

Croatian officials said Thursday they had seized a shipment of weapons and ammunition from Iran bound for Muslim-led fighters in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It was the first confirmed report of an Islamic nation smuggling arms to the Bosnian government and was likely to feed claims by Serbs that they are fighting Islamic fundamentalism in Yugoslavia. In fact, Bosnia's Slavic Muslims are among the most secular in the world.

On Friday, the Security Council's sanctions committee met and gave Tehran one week to explain the incident, said the body's chairman, Japanese deputy permanent representative Katsumi Sekai.

Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, on a visit to China, denied Friday Iran had sent weapons to the Balkan war zone, where Muslims and Croats have been battling Serbs over the country's break from Yugoslavia.

But Mr. Rafsanjani said Iran will consider sending weapons to Bosnia if diplomatic efforts fail to end the conflict.

The Croatian foreign ministry, in a statement, said an Iranian-owned Boeing 747 landed Sept. 4 in Zagreb with a cargo listed as humanitarian aid for the neighbouring country.

But Croatian inspectors, in the

presence of representatives of the U.N. protection force in Croatia, also found "a certain amount of light infantry weaponry and ammunition," the statement said.

The airplane was returned to Iran, but the weapons were impounded in a guarded warehouse, Croatia's Foreign Ministry said.

A top U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the incident.

The Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, an Iranian opposition group based in Washington and Iraq, said Saturday that Tehran had been sending weapons to Bosnia for months.

A statement from the group quoted an Iranian cleric, Ahmad Jannati, as having said after an Aug. 12 trip to Bosnia: "Presently the people of Bosnia need weapons more than anything else."

"Iran must take the initiative before anyone else and supply them with what they need," it quoted Mr. Jannati as saying.

It said Iran had sent Revolutionary Guard units to Bosnia as long ago as June to help its resistance against the Serbs.

The Mujahedeen has a network of sympathisers inside Iran that provides it with information, but its disclosures are not always independently verifiable.

Despite a formal defence pact signed in June between Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic and his Croatian counterpart Franjo Tudjman, relations have soured.

Muslims accuse Croats of secretly conspiring with Serbs to carve up Bosnia between them. Last month, Croat forces close to Sarajevo turned back at least two arms shipments to Sarajevo's besieged defenders, Bosnian defence officials said.

Ethiopian dilemma — recognised as Jews but not as rabbis

TEL AVIV (AP) — When the Jews of Ethiopia were flown to Israel in a dramatic airlift last year, Israelis quickly warmed to their quiet, unassuming manner and their sheer joy at being in the "promised land."

But the romance is wearing off, as was demonstrated Thursday by a stone-throwing clash that left three officers and six Ethiopians injured.

The violence was sparked by the state rabbinate's refusal to recognise the Ethiopian kessim, or spiritual leaders, as rabbis with the power to marry and divorce members of their 23,000-strong flock.

With jobs and housing scarce, the Ethiopian newcomers have been quick to learn the power of pressure tactics like hunger strikes, protest marches and, in extreme cases, stone-throwing outside Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office.

Dressed in white robes and headgear, their humble belongings, hanging in bundles from the trees, dozens of kessim and supporters have been protesting outside Mr. Rabin's office for nearly two weeks.

In fact, the kessim are being treated in much the same way as reform and conservative rabbis, who are not recognised by the orthodox rabbinate.

But the kessim say they performed as rabbis for centuries in Ethiopia, and feel insulted that they aren't allowed to do so in Israel. And since the marriage code is a monopoly controlled by the state rabbinate, a wedding or divorce performed by an Ethiopian minister is not recognised by the state.

The rabbinate maintains that the kessim, cut off for so long from the Jewish mainstream, do not know enough Jewish law to qualify as rabbis, and must sit a test before

they can receive the title. "It is inconceivable that every ethnic group that comes will demand its own rabbis. Rabbis must learn how to be rabbis for marriage and divorce," the chief ashkenazi rabbi, Avraham Shapira, told the kessim at a meeting Monday.

"The kessim in Ethiopia were all powerful. They conducted all the religious ceremonies of the community. They did everything. And here they come to Israel... and all their dignity is trampled," Rahamim Elazar, a spokesman for Ethiopian Jewry, said on Israel Radio Thursday.

"Who in Ethiopia, especially the kessim, could have imagined themselves standing in the Holy City of Jerusalem demonstrating against the Israeli government. But reality forced them to do it," he said.

Yehudi Barchan, 47, says he was a spiritual leader for more than 18 years in a village in the province of Gondar.

He says he cannot accept any changes that conflict with Jewish law as he knows it. He maintains that the orthodox way offends his tradition.

They are using a new language, not the way of the Torah. They are not going in the ancient way," Mr. Barchan said, his face intent as he wrapped his white robe closer around him.

Ethiopian Jews observe the first five books of the Old Testament, but not the Talmud, the massive commentary compiled from 200-500 A.D.

Rabbinate spokesman Rami Sadan likens the problem to that of immigrant Russian doctors who must take tests to qualify to practice.

"The Ethiopian community must do some hard thinking," commented the Jerusalem Post.

Banker due for sentence over U.S. loans to Iraq

ATLANTA (Agency) — Federal prosecutors are expected to seek a stiff sentence Monday for the banker who masterminded a scheme to funnel \$5 billion in unreported loans to Iraq prior to its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Christopher Drogoul has pleaded guilty to 60 felonies, including fraud and money laundering, committed while he was manager of the Atlanta branch office of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) of Italy. Mr. Drogoul will appear for sentencing on Monday before Judge Marvin Shoob.

In a 53-page report given to Mr. Shoob Friday prosecutors argued that Mr. Drogoul should not receive a reduced sentence for his cooperation with the government in its investigation. The maximum sentence for Mr. Drogoul on all charges could total 390 years in prison, \$17.5 million in fines and an order to pay \$1.8 billion in restitution.

Mr. Drogoul and other bank officials were arrested after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), acting on a tip from the Atlanta branch office on Aug. 4, 1989, and seized bank records.

Five other people were indicted with Mr. Drogoul, including his former chief assistant, Paul von Wedel, also have pleaded guilty to various charges and will be sentenced later.

Mela Maggi and Jean Ivey were given immunity from prosecution for tipping off the FBI about the scheme and informing on Drogoul and other co-workers. Maggi and Ivey headed BNL Atlanta's money desk and arranged the Iraqi loans.

BNL officials in Rome, the government-owned bank's headquarters, denied knowledge of the money-laundering scheme and have not been indicted.

The bank's top two officers in Rome resigned, however, after the scandal became public. Mr. Drogoul contends that he was acting on orders from Rome.

The Bush administration guaranteed nearly \$2 billion in agricultural loans to Iraq by BNL-Atlanta. Later, the Atlanta bank secretly committed to lend billions more for non-agricultural exports to Iraq, which used some of the money to purchase military items used against Kuwait and U.S. and United Nations forces that drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

BNL-Atlanta officials kept two sets of books to hide the secret loans to Iraq.

In June Judge Shoob recommended appointment of a special prosecutor independent of the U.S. Justice Department to look into what he described as unusual conduct, including phone calls from White House officials to the U.S. attorney's office in Atlanta.

The Justice Department rejected a congressional request for a special prosecutor.

The Justice Department for 18 months withheld the names of companies that financed the exports to Iraq through BNL-Atlanta to avoid unfairly linking the businesses to Iraqi weapons programs, a newspaper reported in its Sunday editions.

At least one of those sheltered companies used money from BNL-Atlanta to ship Iraq machinery needed to manufacture cluster bombs, rockets and mortars, the Atlanta Journal Constitution reported.

The Justice Department protected exporters who used \$5 billion in unauthorised BNL loans to ensure fairness during investigation of the scandal.

For example, an indictment that listed each exporter had the names deleted at the order of U.S. Assistant Attorney General Robert Maser before it was made public last year.

SINCERE CONDOLENCES

The staff of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States (UNEDBAS) express their great distress and grief at the death of

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Kazem
Former Personal Representative of UNESCO

Director General for the Arab States and Director of UNEDBAS

who passed away, on Saturday, September 12, 1992, in his home in Cairo, after suffering from a disease which had bedridden him for a long time.

The deceased was one of the most prominent educationalists in the Arab World. He was a professor of education in Egyptian and Arab universities, a founder and president of Qatar University, personal representative of the UNESCO Director General in the Arab States and Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States (UNEDBAS). He retired from UNESCO in 1990 upon which he returned to his home country, Egypt, to assume the position of professor at the Faculty of Education of Al-Azhar University.

Dr. Kazem was highly respected by his colleagues, and all those who worked with him, as a prominent intellectual, a competent administrator, a sincere and humane person.

UNEDBAS staff wish to extend their deepest sympathy and their sincerest condolences to Dr. Kazem's family and friends.

AN EVENING OF SONG



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The National Music Conservatory/Noor Al Hussein Foundation and
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present
Tania Tamari Nasir (soprano)
Marwan Shamiyeh (tenor)
accompanied by pianist Siham Shihadeh Baddour

Saturday and Sunday, September 19 and 20, 1992 - 8:00 p.m.
at the Royal Cultural Centre
In the programme vocal works by: Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, Beethoven and others.

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- Rihani Stores, tel. 693775
- M.A.P. tel. 611065
- Philadelphia Hotel, tel. 663100
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 687620

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
18:00	Au Claire de la Lune
18:10	Le Monde Sous Marine
18:20	News in French
18:30	Weekly Sports Magazine
18:40	News in Hebrew
18:50	News in Arabic
19:00	Close to Home
21:10	Gone to the Dogs
22:00	News in English
22:30	Straw Family
PRAYER TIMES	
06:56	Fajr
06:14	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:52	Asr
16:43	Maghrib
18:49	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetich, Tel. 810740	
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Torre Santa Church Tel. 622666	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 625543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Assyrian International Church Tel. 685326	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 654932, 654932	
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
It will be fair and some clouds will appear at various altitudes. Winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Amman Min/Max. temp. 16/28	
Aqaba 22/35	
Deserts 16/31	
Jordan Valley 21/34	
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 28, Aqaba 35. Humidity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul	898140
Dr. Abdul Wabab Awad	84607
Dr. Rami Mizarawi	894788
Dr. Jamal Al Jabari	796440
First pharmacy	661912
Second pharmacy	778336
Al Aseer pharmacy	637055
Netroukhi pharmacy	623672
Al Saham pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shamsat pharmacy	637650
AMMAN:	
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul	898140
Dr. Abdul Wabab Awad	84607
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Al Aseer pharmacy	637055
Netroukhi pharmacy	623672
Al Saham pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shamsat pharmacy	637650
EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Emergency	630341
Rescue	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	894002
Traffic Police	896380
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	897467
Amman Municipality	787111
Complaints	787111
Telephone Information	621
(direct assistance)	010230
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	621011
Repairs	623101
Abdullah Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111</

Amman's fading past

By Laney Salisbury
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — From one traffic circle to eight; from seven hills to 19; from a dusty village of 10,000 to a sprawling limestone city of 1.5 million people, Amman has grown to the uneasy beat of the Middle East.

Wars and politics touched off most of Amman's growth, established as a capital in 1923 when the government seat moved from Salt. But as Amman continues to expand, west across precious agricultural land and east across desert, the capital is turning its back on its 3,000-year-old downtown.

Jordanians continue to move from downtown, where they once shopped in souks and watched plays in a 2,000-year-old Roman amphitheatre, to the self-contained suburbs on the breezy knolls.

"I'm not against development but I am against forgetting what already exists," said architect Taleb Rifai, head of a movement to renovate homes downtown.

"By ignoring the centre we are ignoring our history, not only Roman history but Jordan's recent past," Rifai said.

Crumbling are the homes once owned by the first Syrian, Palestinian and Circassian immigrants. In Basman Street, the Damascene style home of Khairi Saudi, the first Syrian family to step foot in Amman in the 1890's is collapsing.

On the top of Jebel Amman, the Bulbeisi homes of the pioneering businessmen still stand with ancient grace but are threatened by high expenses, no government help and inheritance squabbles. The homes, built in 1933 and 1949, were once reststops for kings, sheikhs and Arab leaders.

Also decaying are Palestinian homes and businesses. In the first two weeks following Israel's creation in 1948, fleeing Palestinians doubled Amman's population, transforming the capital from a town of 66,750 people to a bustling city of 133,500.

After Israel captured the West Bank in 1967, Amman steadily grew from about 300,000 to 788,000 by the following decade.

The Gulf crisis spurred the third major population — and construction — spate.

Looking out at the vastness of countryside, now we are practically in the middle of the city. Hani Malhas recalls listening to the rustle of wheat ripple across



A DYING PART OF TOWN: Haphazard rush to build, traffic snarls, pollution and neglect are further fueling the decay of downtown

the plains not more than 10 years ago.

Now, the plains rumble with the sound of cement trucks and bulldozers as workers scurry to meet the demand of Amman, described by some as one of the fastest growing capitals in the world.

"Our house used to be in the middle of the city," Mr. Malhas, 62, said from his home between the Fourth and

Fifth Circle.

Since the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, about 350,000 Jordanians and Palestinians returned from Arab Gulf states, with many settling in Amman.

The capital is still trying to cope.

Since March, Amman Municipality has issued double the number of licences processed last year. The planned 8,300 buildings are to cover 2.4 million square

metres of land.

"Nobody cares how the buildings look or how they are being built. Contractors are in a hurry — construction is a good business," says Faisal Al Masri, a technical expert at Jordan Engineers Association (JEA), which approves construction licences.

This haphazard rush to build, however, has further fueled decay of downtown, the heart of the Ammonite capital stormed in 1000 B.C. by King David when he sent Uriah the Hittite to his death to take his beautiful wife, Bathsheba.

Of the 110 historic homes mapped by Rifai in 1983, about 43 remain, victim to laws that allow a house more than 30 years old to be easily demolished.

Lebanese-style homes with verdant courtyards and apartments with Nabulus handpainted tiles built in the 40's crumble into narrow alleys and onto steep stairways leading from the trapped grime of downtown to suburb's broad streets and chrome polished shops.

Downtown is the traditional Middle East where aromas of spices spilling from sacks mix with roasting corn and cardamom-scented coffee brewing over coals.

It's where merchants sell gold, embroidery and Arabic sweets; where diners can eat late-night snacks of hummus and drink tea 24 hours a day.

But with worsening traffic snarls, pollution, neglect and the flight of government ministries to new neighbourhoods, few people dare beat the paths trodden by the first century Roman conquerors who rebuilt this city on seven hills — like Rome.

A major blow came in 1979 when the Philadelphia Hotel, the headquarters of the late King Abdullah, was demolished for a square rarely enjoyed.

"I only go downtown to buy things that I can't find in the suburbs," said Fatima Assad. "Sometimes I can't even get a taxi to take me there."

But for Rifai, fighting for Amman is worth the struggle.

Often he organises trips downtown with friends and family to explore alleys, negotiate stairway steps or "just watch the tide of posterity."

"This is our history, the history of Jordan," the history of the Middle East. We can't turn our backs on it," he said.

Huge debts paralyse Madaba Municipality

MADABA (Petra) — Huge debts and an empty treasury are making it impossible for Madaba Municipality to offer necessary services to the city's residents.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the environment Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat last week put the municipality's debt at JD 1.207 million, but Madaba Mayor Mohammad Abu Kaff says the municipality's indebtedness is about JD 400,000 more.

The municipality is bankrupt and cannot offer proper services to the town's residents, Mr. Abu Kaff said Sunday at a press conference held to discuss the difficulties the city is facing.

"The city streets are damaged, the pavements are in terrible conditions, and most of the machinery owned by the municipality, including the garbage collection trucks, are out of order," Mr. Abu Kaff said, adding that the municipality cannot remedy the situation due to lack of funds.

In addition to the debts that the council inherited from its predecessor when it took office in 1989, Mr. Abu Kaff said

that the municipality is also obliged to come up with JD 100,000 in compensation to citizens for property and real estate appropriated by the previous municipal council.

61 government officials retire

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Sunday announced the retirement of 61 officials employed by the Ministries of Education and Interior as well as the Public Security Department.

A statement said that upon the recommendation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Thooqan Hindawi 25

Ministry of Education officials will be retired as of Sept 16. It said 17 other officials employed at the Civil Status and Passports Department, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Interior, will be retired as of Sept. 16. Their retirement was recommended by Minister of Interior Jawdat Shoul.

The statement said that the Interior Minister also recommended that 19 officers serving with the Public Security Department be retired as of Sept. 15.

Local firms display products in Moscow

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first Jordanian industrial fair in Russia opens in Moscow Tuesday, displaying products manufactured by 334 local firms.

A team representing businesses taking part in the fair is due to leave for the Russian capital Monday to attend the opening of the week-long fair, which is being organised by the Jordan Trade Association (JTA) in cooperation with the Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCCO) of the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Minister of Industry and Trade Abdullah Ensour has said that Russia holds a potential market for Jordan's products and the fair would be a good opportunity for Jordanian businesses to open new markets.

JTA Vice-President Kamal Qaqish, who is leading the team to Moscow, said the fair "will be

one more link in a long chain of the association's efforts to promote the sale of high-quality Jordanian products abroad."

He said a large number of Jordanian products which used to be sold in the Arab markets have now found their way to European, African and American markets.

According to Mr. Qaqish, Jordan is displaying a wide range of products, which, among other things, include wooden furniture, scent, medicines, paints, electric appliances, tissue paper, gas ranges, syringes, chemical detergents, soap, hair shampoo, car filters, and batteries, perambulators, ladder, heaters, and refrigerators.

Mr. Qaqish said JTA will shortly open a permanent office in Moscow to serve as a liaison between Russian and Jordanian businesses.

According to JTA President Samih Darwazah, Jordan's exports rose significantly this year compared with last year. In a statement last month, he said that JTA was organising fairs around the world in order to boost trade and exports. He said the first shipment of Jordanian-made medicine was last month sent to the American markets and that plans were in the offing for more exports.

Mr. Darwazah told the Jordan Times then that 5000 cartons of medicine manufactured in Jordan were sold in the United States.

The JTA last month arranged for Jordan's participation in the Izmir International Fair in Turkey and announced plans for participation in other fairs in a bid to help promote the sale of Jordanian products.

Envoy says French markets open for Jordanian goods

AMMAN (Petra) — The French Government welcomes the establishment of joint Jordanian-French industrial businesses, and

French industrial businesses, and urges Jordanian exporters to sell Jordanian products in French markets, according to Michel Duger, the commercial attaché at the French Embassy in Amman.

The coming financial and commercial protocol to be concluded between Jordan and France will facilitate the establishment of services and industrial projects in the Kingdom, said Mr. Duger at a press conference Sunday.

Mr. Duger said the commercial section at the French embassy in Amman is ready to provide Jordanian private sector merchants and industrialists with all information that can contribute to, and encourage the promotion of, trade exchanges between the two nations.

French companies have implemented numerous projects in Jordan including hospitals, telecommunications net works, a fer-

tiliser plant, hotels, schools and airports, he said.

In addition, Mr. Duger said Jordan now has 18 offices affiliated to French insurance and aviation, clothes, geological and oil prospecting companies.

He said Jordan's imports from France last year amounted to JD 74 million while France's imports of Jordanian products amounted only to JD 3.2 million in the same year.

"There is need for Jordan to help adjust the balance of trade with France through selling more Jordanian products in French markets," said Mr. Duger.

He said that his department will on Sept. 19 embark on a new programme for marketing French products in Jordan and a delegation representing the Arab, French Chamber of Commerce will be visiting the Kingdom on Sept. 25. The visit will be followed by a French trade week to display France's new products to the Jordanian public, he said.

Committee to distribute aid to the needy

AMMAN (Petra) — A special committee set up by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to raise funds for the needy Sunday held its second meeting under the chairmanship of Awqaf Minister Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi. The committee decided to distribute basic foodstuffs such as rice, sugar, flour and milk to the poor throughout the Kingdom.

The committee also decided to set up a sub-committee to supervise the distribution process and prepare lists of the needy people in the country.

In another development, the committee received further donations from various institutions, companies and banks. The Islamic Bank donated JD 10,000, Jerusalem Insurance Company donated JD 1,000, the National Steel Industries Company donated JD 5,000, Palestine Hospital JD 5,000 and the Economic Press JD 50.

In Zarqa, the Islamic Cultural Charity donated foodstuffs worth JD 7,000, and Azraq Cooperative Society donated JD 3,000 to the society's staff and to the needy people in the area.

The committee was formed at the request of Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, following a message from His Majesty King Hussein requesting that all spending on celebrations over his recovery be diverted to charity.

WHAT'S GOING ON Exhibitions

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artists Ghassan Gha'eb and Walid Rashid at Badaina Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition entitled "A Dialogue in Expression" — works on paper by Naz Ikramallah, Nabila Hilmil and Dodi Tabasa at the National Gallery, Jabal Lawweideh Park.
- ★ Exhibition entitled "Exploring Science" at Al Hussein Vocational School in Karak.

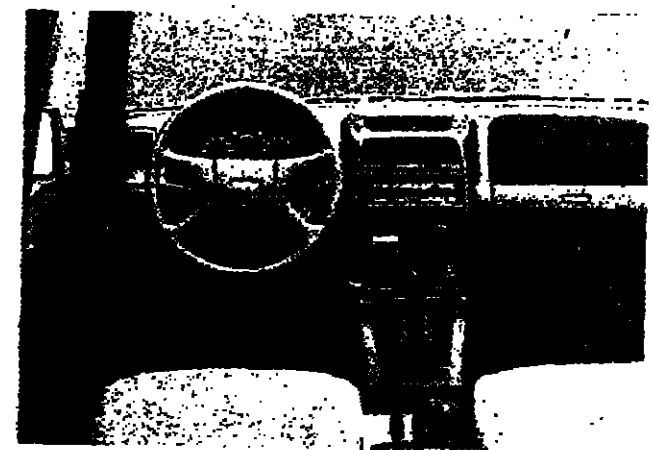
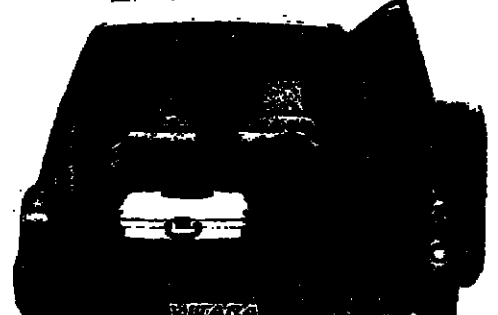
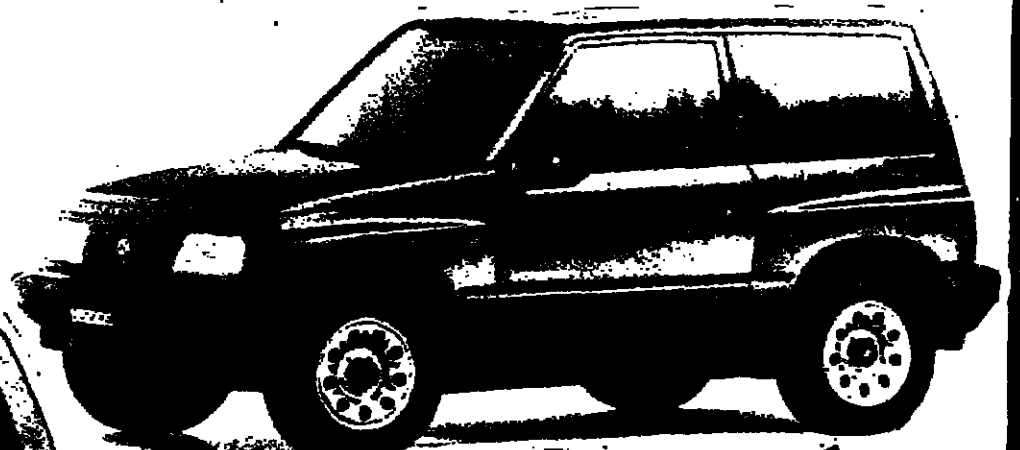
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Law above politics

WASHINGTON'S bid to legalise its plan to seize Iraqi assets abroad is bound to wreak havoc in the international money markets and undermine the international banking system. This is not the first time that the U.S. and its allies have circulated this scheme, which was originally motivated by the desire to circumvent Iraq's refusal to sell its oil under the terms and conditions prescribed by the U.N. Security Council.

The council has been seeking to generate controlled Iraqi revenues in order to compensate victims of the Gulf war as well as to pay the expenses incurred by the U.N. inspections teams that aim to scrap Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. But the way to go about achieving this goal must be in conformity with established international law. Otherwise the credibility of the entire banking system would be irrevocably undermined. No wonder the initial plan to confiscate Iraqi funds estimated to be well over \$3 billion was frowned at by several members of the Security Council and condemned by financial centres all over the world.

Iraq has already paid dearly for its invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Instead of squeezing it to death, it must be allowed to move more freely in order to be able to meet its international obligations as spelled out by the relevant international resolutions. Trade and commercial sanctions must be eased and relaxed gradually. Contacts with Baghdad must also be resumed irrespective of how countries view or regard the present leadership in that ravaged country. The essential thing is to avoid hurting the Iraqi people by way of meaning to hurt its regime. Surely Iraqis will be in a better position to determine their future and the shape and form of their regime if they are not being bled to death by the international community.

Instead of expropriating Iraqi money deposited in several capitals on the basis that these banks would honour at all times the established banking norms, Iraq should be allowed to use its assets to buy essentials for its people. The war in the Gulf ended more than a year and a half ago and it is high time to end the vindictive stance of the West; if not towards the Iraqi government then for the people of Iraq who have no say whatsoever about the decisions being imposed upon them. What incentives is the West leaving for Baghdad to play ball and reintegrate into the comity of nations? Pushing that country to desperation might indeed invite disasters of unknown proportions.

In any case, whatever additional actions the Security Council seeks to adopt against that defenseless country must be lawful and not the kind that envisage flouting customary international law or the painstakingly arrived financial and banking standards.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IN VIEW OF the common challenges facing the Arabs and those posed against Damascus and Baghdad, there can be no alternative to a united and mobilised Arab force, said Al Ra'i daily Sunday. The paper said that the Arabs have confidence in the Damascus statements that it will not succumb to Israel's pressures and conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel over the Golan Heights and they trust Baghdad's declaration of its determination to defy any evil attempts to partition its territory. But, said the paper, the Arab masses want to see reconciliation between Baghdad and Damascus in order to pave the ground for a new Arab reality. The paper urged Syria and Iraq to transcend differences and embark on serious efforts to reestablish some kind of solidarity in the face of the common dangers. Israel's procrastination in implementing Security Council resolutions and withdrawal from Arab lands and Western nations' threats against Baghdad, should prompt the two neighbouring Arab countries to come together and chart out a joint strategy to deal with this situation, urged the paper. Solidarity among the Arab states can make it clear to the enemies of the Arab Nation that neither Baghdad nor Damascus would be left alone facing the dangers, said the daily. It said that the Arab states should realise that they are entering a new era, characterised by fast moving developments on all fronts, and therefore should build bridges of understanding among themselves as the Arab masses are looking forward to a brave action on the part of their rulers and to stand up to the challenge posed by their enemies.

ISRAEL'S OFFER to Syria to settle the Golan Heights issue in a separate move from the rest of the Arab-Israeli conflict was a clear attempt to draw a wedge in the ranks of the united Arab parties at the peace negotiations, said a columnist in 'Al Dustour' daily. Saleh Al Qallab said that Israel wants to remove Syria from the scene of the conflict so that it can deal with the Palestinian question at will in a manner that would serve its own purpose. The writer said that Syria has already turned down the Israeli offer and the temptation which reminds us of the evil character of the Camp David Accord and has put an end to Yitzhak's Rabin's attempts to deal with the Arab countries separately. The writer said that it was Syria which has been warning the Arab states against Israel's attempts at reaching separate deals with them and it was Syria which objected to the election that was arranged by Israel to be conducted in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for fear that the election would be taken as a separate action to the problem. By offering Damascus a separate solution to the Golan Heights, Israel is trying to disrupt the coordinated and concerted stands of the Arab parties at the talks in Washington and confuse the Arab regimes, the writer added. He said Israel is trying to transform the Arab-Israeli conflict into an Israeli-Palestinian conflict so that it can impose its will on the Palestinian people.

Weekly Political Pulse

Palestinian patience might bear fruit

ISRAELI Foreign Minister Shimon Peres recently compared the Palestinian quest for statehood, with one leap forward, with wanting a baby without the pains and tribulations of a pregnancy. This remark was by no means whimsical but rather one that calls for reflection and deep consideration. Fact is that not only did the Palestinian side have already "a pregnancy" as suggested, it also had one of the longest "pregnancies" that was ever recorded in contemporary times. Given the fact that the Palestinian people has strived for statehood and independence since the British mandate was imposed on their homeland, back in the 1917-48 era, and has renewed this national aspiration ever since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and frustrated the national unity between them and the Jordanian people, there can be no doubt that the Palestinians' gestation period for attaining their national aspirations is unduly prolonged and painful. So even if one accepts to entertain the counsel of Peres to the Palestinian leadership on the need to construct their statehood block by block and step by step, no one in his right mind can accuse the Palestinian side of acting precipitously in their search for identity and independence. As a matter of fact, several Palestinian generations have been spent in that direction, albeit not widely and productively at times.

Having said this much to set the record straight, one hastens still to counsel the Palestinian side to be a bit more patient and accept to prolong the agony of the Palestinian national pregnancy period if for no other reason than for the lack of viable options.

It must be conceded that many valuable opportunities were lost by the Palestinians simply because they bit off more than they could chew in the past. Rejecting half a loaf back in 1947-48, when the cards were heavily stacked against them, made the Palestinians miss an opportunity of a lifetime to attain their statehood and independence. Ruling out the Camp David Accords as a basis for picking up the pieces also lost the Palestinian side another occasion to achieve at least some of its objectives. It must be conceded by now that had the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty been even reluctantly endorsed, for tactical reasons at least, enough institutional blocks could have been constructed on its edifice to bring the Palestinians closer to their aspirations than they are now.

After the lapse of more than thirteen years, admittedly something less than the Camp David Accords is being offered the Palestinians and, accordingly, the Palestinian negotiating teams are tempted to reject it for the same reasons they had rejected the partition plan of 1947 and the subsequent opportunities to salvage what could be salvaged.

Surely at the next stop something even less than what is being offered the Palestinians now would be put on the negotiating table, if there will ever be one in the future. Against this cycle of understandable but fatal rejections, the Palestinian side needs to stop and reflect very carefully after taking stock of its operational options. It would be infinitely easier to walk out of the ongoing peace talks because the Israelis are not putting on the negotiating table anything near what the Palestinian people have been yearning for generations. But such a course would also be infinitely more irresponsible since any future occasions to probe into a Palestinian-Israeli settlement would offer the Palestinian side something drastically less than the incomplete and unfair offer being presented to them now.

It would seem a safer bet under the prevailing Arab and international circumstances to say that the Palestinians may succeed to build on the "little things" being made available to them as a way to get them closer to their aims and aspirations instead of waiting for the ideal Arab and international moment in history to stake out their national claim. Time appears to be on the side of the Israelis and if the settlement process continues for much longer, there may be less Palestinian territory and fewer people left to bargain with in the future.

In retrospect, there would have been less Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories had the Palestinian leadership had the necessary wisdom and seen the relative value of accepting the Camp David peace agreements. The clock is ticking away and, unfortunately, not to the advantage of the Arab side. Against this backdrop, the prolongation of the Palestinian pregnancy could be better than aborting, at a time when the chances of having another pregnancy do not seem to be in the cards. That does not mean acquiescence to a sell out but rather extending the Palestinian patience for a little longer.

By Walced Sadi

LETTERS

Misguided opportunity

To the Editor:

I have read with incredible astonishment and surprise the article written by Rami Khouri, "Jordan's opportunity: Where history and elegance coincide" (Jordan Times, Sept. 8, 1992) and would like to make a few comments on it.

I do not intend to list the immense political, humanitarian, economic and social advances His Majesty King Hussein has brought to Jordan during the past forty years of his reign in spite of the scarce resources available in Jordan. I will leave that to our politicians and maybe parliamentarians. However, I feel it is my duty to at least respond with some points:

1. The phrase "take the opportunity" sounds inadequate, inappropriate and completely out of place. Mr. Khouri seems to be suggesting that we open our eyes so that we might "take the opportunity" while His Majesty is sick to find someone to (succeed) him. His Majesty, in turn, should also "finally take the opportunity" to have the fun he has always been denied. Mr. Khouri further suggests. Why, might one ask, this insistence on "taking the opportunity"?
2. He seems to insist that there should be "a successor" to His Majesty. I am sorry that I will have to be the one to break the news to our distinguished writer, but, Jordan already has a Crown Prince, who is highly educated, cultured, intellectually profound and, may I add, one of the top economists in the world. Ever since he became Crown Prince, he has resolutely worked in close cooperation with His Majesty; he has achieved a great deal for Jordan, and is a highly acclaimed scholar internationally. He, better than anybody, has the pulse of the country, having studied in-depth and understood the economic and social situation of Jordan.
3. Regarding Mr. Khouri's phrase about the people who "profess" to show affection to His Majesty with a shower of superlative praise; I, and let me assure you there are quite a lot of us around, mean it completely and wholeheartedly. We have an unprompted and instinctive liking for our leader, and have no ulterior motives for our respect, admiration, loyalty and love.

On the whole, I think the article was absolutely useless and in very poor taste. King Hussein does not want to "cling" to power eternally. It is us, the true Jordanians, who should be aware of what he has done and is capable of continuing to do, who want to "cling" to him.

Shereen Butros Shurwayhat,
Amman.

Grateful for the lesson

To the Editor:

IT IS my right, indeed duty, to respond to Ms. Muna Kassab's letter (Jordan Times, Sept. 12), in which my name was mentioned.

While I fully recognise Ms. Kassab's right to admit her failure to see the contradiction between Mr. Khouri's article and "Jordanian, Arab, and Muslim customs and tradition," I cannot see how she was able to conclude that I misunderstood the essence of that article.

I also fully recognise and respect her right to question my integrity and motives, in her defence of Mr. Khouri's integrity and motives, which according to her "cannot be questioned." But why did she have to accuse "many in this country" whose integrity and motives, according to her, can be questioned. How many does her "many" mean? Who are they? Why doesn't she name them? Who gave her the right to pass judgement en masse, as she did, on many Jordanian citizens?

I entirely agree with Ms. Kassab's appeal for "soul-searching," for she indirectly accused the Jordanians of irresponsibility, when she said that: "Rami Khouri wants to instill" in them "the sense of responsibility." She insinuated that the Jordanian nation is not "a close-knit nation," that they are incapable of shouldering their duty and that they "wallow in self-pity." All that to defend Mr. Khouri's article?

I wholeheartedly confess that, in accordance with Ms. Kassab's advice, I have learnt a great deal about how not to make irresponsible, inappropriate and discourteous comments from her letter, for which I am very grateful.

Dr. Maan Abu Nowar,
P.O. Box 35018,
Amman

India's democracy — a model

The Commonwealth's largest country, India, is also the largest democracy in the world. In tune with the times, India's role in the comity of nations is getting due importance. A fall-out of the collapse of communism is the realisation that the bedrock of what we do must be the general application of democracy and human rights.

Till recently, India was hemmed in by discards. Although the communist ideology as such has had few adherents among the Third World elite, the intolerance of criticism of governments has been fairly widespread, especially in Africa.

The eleventh Commonwealth Summit in Harare, last October, upheld the democratic idea. However, Britain and Canada, apparently acting at the insistence of the United States, were ill-advised to try to link Western economic aid to political reforms. India, Malaysia and host Zimbababwe fiercely opposed this kind of a coercive approach which they felt was unlikely to succeed. Without wishing to impose par-

ticular models, the Commonwealth leaders agreed to create a facility to monitor elections in member-countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat has so far sent observer teams to monitor elections in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Zambia.

A wave of human rights and democracy is sweeping across much of the world. India could serve as a model for the Third World. The democratic institutions have gained firm roots in India, providing political stability. It achieved a green revolution and emerged as the eleventh largest industrial power of the world. It can boast of a sizeable pool of scientific talent.

A 19-month-long state of emergency imposed by late Indira Gandhi in 1975 was an aberration. India has had ten general elections since independence in 1947. Power has changed hands twice from the ruling party to the opposition in a most orderly manner. The defence services remain apolitical.

Its detractors say that the Indian democracy suffered from some

infirmity because of one-family rule. The criticism is hardly justified as late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi derived power from the democratic process.

The assumption of power by Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao last year leaves no room for any such criticism.

India has all along remained a major participant in the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Lt. Gen. Saheb Nambiar is currently heading the U.N. forces braving fire in Bosnia in the erstwhile Yugoslavia. An Indian contingent has already left for Phnom Penh to restore peace in Cambodia and help in organising elections some time next year. These are the latest examples.

India is a key influence in the democratic changes taking shape in South Asia. Pakistan is experimenting with democracy. Democratically-elected prime ministers have assumed office in Nepal and Bangladesh. The king of Bhutan is facing pressure to follow suit.

The Indian influence seems to

be pervasive as Pakistan's National Assembly, to a large extent, is being guided by the rules and practices of the Indian parliament. Pakistan's judiciary relies on the Indian supreme court's judgments.

Interestingly, a petition filed by Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, challenging late Gen. Ziaul Haq's move to hold partyless elections in 1985, created a piquant situation. When a counsel quoted extensively from an Indian court judgment, his opponent rose to say: "are we sitting in a court in India or Pakistan?"

Undeterred, the advocate turned to the full bench of Pakistan Supreme Court and quipped: "The judgment is relevant and they write good English."

Mrs. Bhutto, during her brief stint as prime minister, suggested establishment of forum of democratic countries to nurture the rule of law in Third World countries. This was soon after the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had visited Islamabad.

She did not last long as prime minister to pursue her idea — UN

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Focus on Israel and Syria

(Continued from page 1)
later by Israel Radio.
A joint declaration, listing areas of agreement and disagreement, could appear during the current Washington session.
Mr. Rabinovich, asked about Mr. Rabin's offer to exchange at least part of the Golan for a peace treaty with Syria, said "break-throughs and also painful concessions" would not happen immediately.
"For the moment we are not discussing the question of sovereignty in the Golan Heights," he said. "I say for the moment because I am character-

ising the negotiations as they stand now. I am not dropping clues about the future."
On Sunday 15 members of parliament toured the Golan, which overlooks the Galilee to the west and the Syrian plain to the north, in a show of support for the Jewish residents.
Rafael Eitan, head of the far-right Tsomet party, talked to Israel Radio from an abandoned Syrian bunker on the Golan. He declared that leaving the plateau could endanger Israel.
Government ministers took to Israeli radio stations on Sunday to support Mr. Rabin's position.

Destruction of crops unrelated to ban

(Continued from page 1)
Arabia has banned Jordanian produce, claiming its vegetable exports were contaminated by pesticides and dirty water. The ban has led to flooding in the local market with produce, depressing prices and denying Jordan of a major hard currency winner.
"There is no connection whatsoever with Saudi Arabia's ban and the decision to destroy vegetables produced with Khirbet Al Samra water," Dr. Kassar said. He added that Jordan is "examining everything going out from farms."
The Saudi embassy in Amman

refused comment but an unidentified official was quoted by Reuters yesterday as reaffirming the ban on Jordanian crops. He said laboratory tests showed vegetable and fruit exports were contaminated.
Jordan has denied the accusation, saying its own tests have come up negative.
Until the Gulf crisis, Saudi Arabia annually imported about 60 per cent of Jordan's 500,000 tonnes of agricultural exports.
At least one Arab official has expressed concern about the contamination and has urged Jordan to investigate other agricultural areas.

League assails Iran over Abu Musa

(Continued from page 1)
over the Bahrain islands," Jomhuri Eslami wrote.
Egypt's foreign minister, Amr Musa, who takes over as head of the Arab League council for the next six months, called the Iranian claim a security threat.
He said the "challenge calls on us to declare our total support for the sister United Arab Emirates and stand with her and support her in holding on to full sovereignty of Abu Musa Island."
"We should declare our severe condemnation of needless measures, and violations of the sovereignty and unity of the regional land of the United Arab Emirates. We should express our clear rejection of Iran's continued occupation of the islands of Greater and Lesser Tonbs," Mr. Musa added.
"The Tonbs, two small islands to the north and east of Abu Musa, have been in Iranian hands since 1971. They are claimed by Ras Al Khaimah, one of the seven emirates in the UAE.
A statement issued after the first session of the two-day meeting, said the Arab ministers "expressed their keenness to (main-

tain) Iraq's independence and the unity of its people and territory."
The statement did not refer to the "no-fly" zone imposed by the West.
But it said the ministers called for "non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs in compliance with the principles and the Charter of the United Nations and international law."
Dr. Abdul Meguid said the statement was issued "after reviewing Iraq's exposure to interference in its internal affairs."
Some diplomats described the statement as a victory for Iraq, which had been unable to command majority support inside the Arab League since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.
Iraq, represented at the Cairo meeting, by Foreign Minister Mohammad Saad Al Sahaf, had asked the league to include the "air-exclusion zone" among other questions up for debate.
Mr. Sahaf met Mr. Musa before the opening session in the first meeting between Iraqi and Egyptian foreign ministers since an Arab summit in August 1990. But Mr. Musa received him as chairman of the meeting, not as Egyptian foreign minister.

Iraq reform calls pick up momentum

(Continued from page 1)
He criticised its requirement of 150 founders for every party as being too strict.
He also called for abolition of a 1969 law that makes it a capital offense for anyone who leaves the Baath Party to join another party.
"It's time to remove obstacles to setting up parties ... and the government should allow people to set up newspapers," he said.
"If we do these things they would

be weapons in the face of the current aggression."
He also dismissed the government contention that the constitution should not be put to a referendum at this time because Baghdad had no authority in the northern Kurdish zone set up by the allies.
He said Kurds in other areas still could vote and said the constitution should go into effect.
A top government official said meanwhile a "national political

Jordan heads for Moscow talks

(Continued from page 1)
The three-day Moscow meeting, which opens Tuesday, is the second session of the working group on disarmament which includes Israel, the Arab states, Australia, China, India and Japan in addition to the United States and Russia — the co-sponsors of the peace process — as well as the European Community (EC).
It is one of the several groups set up in Moscow in January when the Russians hosted the launching of the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace process. The other groups, which deal with issues such as regional economic cooperation, refugees, water-sharing and the environment, are also meeting this month in other world capitals.
The first meeting of the group on disarmament was held in Washington in May. The Palestinians were kept out of the meeting after Israel and the U.S. argued that they did not repre-

sent a sovereign entity with armed forces. A Palestinian delegation was present in Washington during the meeting and held informal talks with other delegates attending the gathering.
It was not clear Sunday whether the Palestinians would be admitted to the Moscow meeting. Informal sources said Mahmoud Abbas, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee, was in Moscow discussing the issue with Russian officials.
Israel also managed to dilute the EC participation in the May meeting in Washington, saying it had reservations over the community's role in view of European arms sales to Arab countries.
Dr. Toukan said the EC was scheduled to present a paper to the Moscow conference, signalling a full role for the 12-member bloc in the working group on disarmament.
Jordan had been lobbying for a full-fledged role for the commun-

ity in the group, he noted.
The way for effective EC participation was believed to have been cleared after Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres visited Britain, which now holds the rotating EC presidency, and France last week. It was not known what conditions he had attached to such an EC role or whether he managed to extract concessions from the Europeans in return.
Reports in the Israeli press

have said that the Jewish state was seeking special treatment and trade privileges from the EC in exchange for dropping its objections to an effective EC role in the peace process.
EC is playing a high-profile role in the other working groups of the Middle East multilateral negotiations.
The Jordanian delegation to the Moscow conference includes two senior officers from the Armed Forces, Omar Nadi Al

Turk from the Foreign Ministry and two officials from the Kingdon's embassy in the Russian capital.
Jordanian and Palestinian delegations to the working group on water left for Washington Saturday.
Syria and Lebanon have so far stayed away from the multilateral talks. Syrian media said Saturday there was no change in the positions of Damascus and Beirut that they would not take part in the regional talks unless progress was made in the bilateral negotiations with Israel.
The Egyptian press reported Saturday that Israel was seeking ministerial-level representation of all parties in the multilateral talks to ensure quick progress. But the stated positions of Jordan and the Palestinians that progress in the multilateral depended on definite results in the bilateral appear to preempt the Israeli drive.

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Financial Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (September 7-September 11, 1992)

AMMAN — After three weeks of significant dollar declines, the U.S. unit staged a "technical" rebound in the second half of last week. Mark sales for European currencies, together with a market re-evaluation of the U.S. currency's near term direction were mainly behind the rebound. The dollar thus ended the week an average of 3.3 per cent higher against European currencies and 0.9 per cent higher against the yen.

While New York closed on Labour Day Monday, trading remained subdued in the Far East and in Europe. Exchange rates closed hardly changed.

As the market rallied against European currencies Tuesday, the dollar dipped below 140 marks again. The rush into marks followed the unexpected announcement by Finland that it was to abandon the Finnish markka's peg to the ECU to allow it to float freely. Although Finland is not a member of the EC, it had linked its currency to the ECU in 1991, together with other Scandinavian countries, as a step towards membership. The "un-pegging" announcement thus sparked speculation that the other Scandinavian countries might follow suit, which caused the flight into marks. The dollar, in its turn, was adversely affected in the process, closing at its lowest of the week at 1.3941 marks, 122.84 yen and \$2.004 to the pound.

The dollar rebounded Wednesday, whereas the mark retreated against other European currencies. On the dollar front, comments by a Fed governor that the dollar was under-valued in purchasing power parity terms seemed to have hit the right key at the right time. Many traders thus sought to cover their short dollar positions as a result.

As for the mark, the previous day's heavy flow into the German currency was partly reversed when Sweden's Riksbank hiked interest rates to an unprecedented 75 per cent to squash speculation fears triggered by Finland's announcement Tuesday.

As the "under-valuation" woes worked their way through, the dollar continued to rally towards the end of the week, finishing the week at its highest in three weeks. Market reports indicated that the U.S. unit also benefited from the mark's retreat against other European currencies, and from traders' keen anticipation over the outcome of the G-7 meetings, scheduled for Sept. 19th in Washington. Traders were attaching more weight to these meetings due to the recently heightened criticism of Germany's high interest rate policy. Technical considerations provided a further boost to the dollar.

While a number of analysts underscored the fact that the fundamentals behind the dollar's weakness have not changed yet, nevertheless, maintained that its recent rise was a healthy correction after the low seen in previous weeks. Disappointing U.S. economic reports next week might thus pressure the dollar slightly, but should not cause another steep decline, according to these analysts.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	4/9/92	11/9/92	Percent Change
Sterling Pound	1.9960	1.9210	(3.76)%
Deutsche Mark	1.4017	1.4508	(3.58)%
Swiss Franc	1.2506	1.2905	(3.09)%
French Franc	4.7685	4.9235	(3.15)%
Japanese Yen	123.13	124.30	(0.94)%

Inter-Currency Interest Rates

Currency	4/9/92	11/9/92	1-Month (%)	3-Month (%)	6-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.12	5.43	3.06	3.37		
Sterling Pound	10.00	10.37	10.18	10.62		
Deutsche Mark	9.56	9.55	9.62	9.43		
Swiss Franc	7.93	7.88	7.66	7.56		
French Franc	10.06	10.25	10.18	10.27		
Japanese Yen	4.25	3.65	4.37	3.65		

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	9/14	9/15
U.S. Dollar	.671	.673
Sterling Pound	1.2878	1.2942
Deutsche Mark	.4621	.4644
Swiss Franc	.5197	.5223
French Franc	.1361	.1368
Japanese Yen	.5393	.5420
Dutch Guilder	.4103	.4124
Swedish Krona	.1265	.1271
Italian Lira	.0604	.0607
Belgian Franc	.02242	.02253

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Russian government plans fight to save reforms

MOSCOW (R) — The Russian government plans a multi-pronged attack on economic and political fronts this autumn as it struggles to keep its reform programme afloat, a deputy prime minister has said.

Alexander Shokhin, in charge of foreign economic affairs, told a news conference the cabinet planned to support the ruble, restrict subsidies on imports and impose tough rules on companies seeking foreign credits.

On the political front, the government, which staged off a no-confidence vote in parliament in spring by threatening to resign, plans to attack its conservative foes headed by Russian Khasbulatov, head of the legislature.

"I think that to prevent changes creeping into our reforms, we will have to loudly spell out the differences. During the (parliamentary) debate, it is likely that the relations will be sorted out," he told reporters after the news conference.

Russia's economic reform programme launched at the start of the year by President Boris Yeltsin's government, has sent prices spiralling up and industrial output spinning down.

Critics say the radical reforms are being watered down, under pressure from the captains of state-owned industry and agriculture.

Mr. Shokhin attacked the Russian Central Bank for not doing enough to support the ruble, exchange rate against the dollar over the past few weeks when it slid to 210.5 to the dollar last week from 168 at the end of last month.

A looser monetary policy under acting bank chairman Viktor Geraschenko could send inflation shooting up, Mr. Shokhin said.

"The government intends to use monetary policy and (hard) currency interventions. It is not a waste of money, as Mr. Geraschenko has said, it is aimed at promoting imports," he pointed out.

Mr. Shokhin said imports were becoming very expensive and the government intended to keep subsidising only vital imports, worth 150 to 200 billion rubles (\$720 to \$970 million). It would mostly be food, medicine and spare parts.

He also said the illegal flight of capital from Russia had cost the country \$2 billion as companies preferred to keep their earnings abroad rather than bring the money home.

The government plans to introduce tough rules on companies which want to get foreign credits, Mr. Shokhin said, adding new rules would lead to much lower demand.

IMF official says U.S. should cut budget deficit

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States should avoid cutting interest rates further and instead should slash its big budget deficit to help restore calm to disorderly currency markets, a senior International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said.

"We don't see what good a further decrease in interest rates would do while we see the risk it would entail for the stability of markets," said the senior official, who declined to be named.

The official, who spoke to reporters ahead of the joint annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank later this month, advocated tax increases and spending cuts to reduce the \$300 billion plus budget deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars.

Both U.S. President George Bush and Democratic challenger Bill Clinton have paid lip service to the need to cut the deficit, but analysts said that neither has come up with a credible plan to achieve that because of the painful measures that would entail.

The U.S. administration instead has relied heavily on interest rate cuts to boost the shaky U.S. recovery and restore confidence, but the senior IMF official's comments signal that strategy has about run its course.

The Fed's repeated interest rate cuts have undermined the value of the dollar on world currency markets — it temporarily dropped to a record low against the German mark this month — by making the currency less profitable for investors to hold.

Investors have also shied away from holding dollars because of worries about the implications of America's burgeoning budget deficit for the long-term health of the U.S. economy.

The disorderly currency markets are expected to be at the top of the agenda when economic policymakers from the United States and its rich industrial nation allies gather here next Saturday ahead of the annual IMF/World Bank meeting.

To help buttress the wobbly dollar, the United States and its allies have intervened in foreign exchange markets to buy the U.S. currency and sell marks.

But the senior IMF official made clear that such short-term moves were only of limited use.

"What is needed here is not very short-term measures ... but serious action to cope with the fundamentals," said the official, who briefed reporters Friday but whose remarks were embargoed until Sunday.

The U.S. budget deficit is expected to hit a record of about \$315 billion in the fiscal year that ends on Sept. 30, equivalent to about six per cent of America's annual gross domestic product (GDP), or output.

The senior IMF official said the deficit should be slashed by the equivalent of four or even per cent of GDP, or by more than \$200 billion.

"It should be done rapidly," he added.

But the United States is not the only culprit when it comes to big budget deficits, Germany and Italy

too must cut the flow of government red ink, the official said.

"Italy will face a major crisis soon if it doesn't put its public sector deficit in order," he said.

The European currency markets are already in turmoil because of very high interest rates in Germany, which are acting as a magnet for capital flows into the country.

Germany has pushed short-term interest rates to 30-year highs to stem the inflationary pressures unleashed by the mounting costs of German unification.

The senior IMF official said that those high interest rates can only be brought down significantly if Germany acts quickly to cut its budget deficit, by reducing costly subsidies and possibly raising taxes.

"In Germany I wouldn't say that what is needed is a quarter (percentage) point less (in interest rates)," he said. "What is needed is steady action to go very low budget deficit and create the conditions for a much more significant reduction in interest rates."

Despite such concerns, the IMF still expects world economic growth to pick up next year to about three per cent from around two per cent in 1992.

Developing nations will be the star performers, racking up growth of about five per cent this year and some six per cent in 1993 as they enjoy the fruits of some of the same tough policies the IMF is now prescribing for industrial countries.

Greek premier insists on austerity despite strikes

ATHENS (R) — Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis vowed Saturday to press ahead with a tough austerity programme despite a month of strikes which have battered all sectors of the economy.

"We will not abandon our efforts to modernise the Greek economy. We will press on," Mr. Mitsotakis said in a speech at the opening of the Salonika International Trade Fair.

Mr. Mitsotakis said the government's belt-tightening measures which include lay-offs in the public sector, cuts in social security benefits and higher taxes on petrol and consumer goods, would show results in 1993.

"After two years of hard work I can now say with certainty that the stabilisation of the Greek economy is succeeding," he said.

He predicted that the inflation rate, now at 15.3 per cent, would drop below 10 per cent by the end of next year and the drachma would join the European Community's Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

The drachma is the only EC currency outside the ERM and inflation was last in single digits in 1972.

Mr. Mitsotakis said the budget deficit would drop from 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1989 to 10 per cent this year. He said GDP would grow by 1.5 per cent in 1992 and by a higher rate in 1993.

He also said an ambitious privatisation programme would pick up steam in 1993 with the sale of state refineries, tourist sites and banks along with part of the giant Greek telecommunications organisation.

Mr. Mitsotakis announced a small

increase in pensions for farmers but made no reference to state salaries which officials have said will rise by only four per cent next year.

The government has come under pressure from the EC to reduce the country's debt and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said last week it must show greater resolve to save the

country from collapse.

But tens of thousands of state workers opposing the austerity measures have staged a series of strikes over the past month, disrupting transport, banking, the postal service and telecommunications and causing long power cuts.

Riot police and strikers have clashed in the streets of Athens several times in the past few days.

The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), which represents more than a million workers, called for a 48-hour general strike starting next Wednesday, the third general strike in as many weeks.

"The measures will not bring a better future for the economy but only greater misery to the workers who are always called on to pay for the government's mistakes," said GSEE leader Lampros Kanellopoulos.

Mr. Mitsotakis said: "I know better than anyone how painful our policy is. But the Greek people understand that there is no other way."

He added: "Our great reforms will be completed by the end of the month and from there on the Greek economy will be ready to enter a new era, an era of success which will be felt by the average citizen."

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Mitterrand: Treaty 'incontestable base' for democracy; voters remain split

PARIS (Agencies) — President François Mitterrand has urged a "yes" vote on the Maastricht Treaty on European unity, saying it will allow European construction "on an incontestable democratic base."

In an interview with three European newspapers, Mr. Mitterrand bitterly criticised treaty opponents and supporters alike who based their position on an fear of an overly potent Germany.

French voters are to cast ballots on Sept. 20. The French vote is crucial to the survival of the treaty, French rejection would torpedo it, forcing governments to abandon the accord or at least start from scratch in renegotiating it.

"Those who turn to ... old resentments are being singularly bypassed by history," Mr. Mitterrand told the independent of Britain, La Republica of Italy and El Pais of Spain in the interview published Sunday.

The interview was conducted before Mr. Mitterrand entered a hospital for routine prostate surgery Friday. He was recovering well, and was scheduled to leave the hospital by mid-week.

It was only the second time in 10 days for Mr. Mitterrand to comment publicly on the referendum. On Sept. 3 he engaged in a three-hour televised debate with treaty opponents.

He had, however, not been expected to campaign actively for the treaty during the week leading up to the referendum.

Some treaty supporters have said European unity is necessary to rein a powerful Germany into a broad alliance, while some oppose the economic and military unification the treaty would bring as they fear policies and currencies would be tied too closely to Germany and the Deutschmark.

Mr. Mitterrand expressed anger with those "who invoke mistrust of the Germans," adding, "it was Chancellor Helmut Kohl who wanted unification of Germany to be parallel with unification of Europe (and sought) in the days after the fall of the Berlin Wall ... to begin the process of political union that ended in Maastricht."

The Maastricht Treaty is named after the Dutch town where the 12 European Community leaders signed the accord last December.

The battle of the public opinion polls on French attitudes toward European unity ended Saturday as it began three weeks ago totally inconclusive.

A ban on the prolific opinion surveys took effect Saturday night. Two final polls made public late Saturday ended up with the same result as more than a score of other surveys on whether French will vote "oui" or "non" next weekend: A dead heat.

As with many of the surveys that preceded them, they gave no margins of error or breakdown of voters who were undecided or refused to answer, instead factoring those replies out to present only the views of decided voters.

One survey, by the polling firm IFOP-JDD, said voters who had made up their minds favoured the treaty 53 per cent to 37 per cent, while the other, by the firm Sofres, had treaty supporters edging opponents 52 per cent to 48 per cent.

Neither however gave the number of voters who said they didn't know or would abstain — frequently as high as 40 per cent of all voters interviewed.

None of the couple of dozen polls in the last three weeks has given either side a majority or clear advantage, so campaigning has remained vigorous among both camps. The large numbers of undecideds or abstentions in the polls that included those figures indicate that the sizable swing vote will certainly determine the outcome.

The polls came out as treaty opponents, who scorn the accord they see as handing over French sovereignty to a cumbersome bureaucracy, held a rousing rally in Paris. Maastricht "is a fatal poison for France," said conservative lawmaker Philippe De Villiers to wild applause from an audience of about 6,000 at an indoor hall.

"It is the prelude to a federal, multinational super-state, a system that has failed everywhere in the world," said Philippe Seguin, a prominent anti-treaty lawmaker from the other mainstream conservative party.

In his interview Mr. Mitterrand said he had expected a "vigorous, intense, close debate."



François Mitterrand

"Europe wrongly crystallises many fears: Change, modernisation, opening to the world and to others," he said. "It's a paradox: people assign Europe imaginary threats, while in fact she protects us ... giving us notably additional advantages to face the United States and Japan."

With a week to go before France's referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, there seems little doubt that the province of Alsace bordering Germany will vote heavily for European union.

"It's going to be a great big 'yes.' After three wars with Germany, we don't want to be a battlefield again," said Senator Hubert Haefliger, local leader of the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) Party.

In Alsace, an opinion poll in the Dernieres Nouvelles D'Alsace newspaper last week said 63 per cent of the region's 1.6 million inhabitants planned to vote "yes."

Questioned on their motivations, Alsatian voters said the prime reason was "to consolidate peace in Europe."

"I was brought up on my grandmother's tales about the stream by our home running red with the mixed blood of dying French and German soldiers in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870," said Lucien Wackenheim, an old-age pensioner.

In 1944, as a teenager, I personally saw two thirds of my village destroyed around me so I say 'never again,'" he said.

"Next Alsacians feel that way. That's why they'll vote to tighten the ties between European countries to make sure they never fight each other again."

From 1871 until World War II, Alsace changed hands five times between France and Germany.

Anti-army parties gaining in Thai vote

BANGKOK (R) — Anti-military parties that sided with demonstrators instead of powerful generals in street confrontations last May appeared to have made gains in Thailand's violence-hit general election Sunday.

Early unofficial results compiled by Channel 9 television and the Nation newspaper showed the Palang Dharma (Moral Force) Party of pro-democracy hero Chamlong Srimuang gaining support in southern Thailand.

Mr. Chamlong, a devout Buddhist known as the Mr. Clean of Thai politics, galvanised democracy forces in May by going on a hunger strike to demand the resignation of Suchinda Kraprayoon, a general made prime minister by pro-military parties despite never having stood in an election.

Gen. Suchinda was forced to resign in disgrace after his soldiers killed scores of demonstrators in attacks that shocked the world.

Mr. Chamlong, who some blame for not exerting more control over the protests, appeared to be losing support in Bangkok, where he once served as governor.

By contrast, his party virtually swept the capital's constituencies in an indicative election in March, taking 32 of 35 seats.

Palang Dharma was leading in only 24 seats this time, but making gains elsewhere in the country, Channel 9 and the Nation said.

The Democrat Party of Chuan Leekpai was making gains in Bangkok.

Mr. Chuan also opposed the government of Gen. Suchinda, but confined his protests to parliament.

Results from the pro-military parties' power bases in the northeast were expected later.

The army has dominated Thai politics since absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932, with 17 coups or coup attempts.

But an interim government of Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun has trimmed the military's might since the May massacre and demoted many of those held responsible.

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Lull in Sarajevo, but peace is still far away

SARAJEVO (R) — Sarajevo's besieged people enjoyed a welcome respite from shelling Sunday, a day after the deadline for the warring sides in Bosnia to place their heavy weapons under the eyes of U.N. observers.

But steps towards a full ceasefire or resumption of suspended aid flights depend on a new round of peace talks starting in Geneva Friday.

Mortars — not covered by the weapons agreement — still rained bombs overnight onto Dobrinja, the city's worst-hit suburb, and a few hit the old town. Security sources said five people had been killed including two children.

But there were no confirmed reports of heavy artillery being used.

The agreement, which also covers the Bosnian towns of Jajce, Bihać and Gorazde, is intended to let monitors from UNPROFOR (the United Nations Protection Force) see which side is starting the shooting.

Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, said all his big guns were now being watched and that he had also agreed to a permanent UNPROFOR liaison officer being stationed at his headquarters at Pale outside the capital.

Local UNPROFOR Commander Brigadier General Hussein Ali Abdul Razek said his teams were in place at 10 of the 11 designated Serb locations around Sarajevo and at four of the seven Bosnian sites. The others would be covered shortly, he added.

But Brig. Abdul Razek said the monitoring alone was "not enough to say we are making any progress" towards an overall ceasefire, and that more measures were needed.

In Washington, U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said he would discuss a European Community plan for a "no-fly zone over Bosnia during a trip to Britain and France beginning Tuesday.

The ban, chiefly aimed at flights by pro-Serb Yugoslav Air Force jets, is designed to make the skies safer for relief flights, although the downing of an Italian aid plane 10 days ago was apparently by a ground to air missile.

asserting that the cancellation does not affect Russian-Japanese relations.

"In no way have we rejected those goals that have been agreed upon between the governments of Russia and Japan, in order to ensure a real turn in relations," Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said after his meeting with Ambassador Sumio Edamura, according to Commonwealth Television.

Meanwhile in Tokyo scores of Japanese right-wing nationalists scuffled with police guarding the Russian embassy in Tokyo Sunday as feelings ran high over president Yeltsin's cancelled state visit.

Witnesses saw at least two busloads of khaki-clad rightists rush police lines and scuffle with helmeted, baton-carrying riot police lined up some 200 metres from the embassy's high metal gates.

The two groups traded punches and shoves but none of the demonstrators appeared to get through.

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Chinese film wins top prize at Venice Film Festival

VENICE, Italy (R) — The Story Of Qiu Ju, a movie about Chinese peasants by director Zhang Yimou, won the Golden Lion top prize at the Venice Film Festival. The jury's special prize went to Death Of A Neapolitan Mathematician by Italian director Mario Martone. The Volpi Cup for best performance by an actor went to American Jack Lemmon for his role in the U.S. film Glengarry Glen Ross. The Volpi Cup for best performance by an actress went to Gong Li for her role in The Story Of Qiu Ju. The Silver Lion Awards went to the Spanish film Jamon, Jamon, the French film Un Coeur En Hiver, and the Romanian film Hotel De Lux.

Women guards in ceremony at Buckingham Palace

LONDON (R) — They changed the guards at Buckingham Palace Saturday — and bandswomen marched onto the forecourt for the first time in 155 years. Nine women musicians donned the black fur hats, blue uniforms and black boots of the band of the Royal Air Force and took part with their male pipers in the colourful ceremony outside Queen Elizabeth's official residence. The air force last year became the first of Britain's armed services to recruit women musicians.

Police confirm accident shot in palace

LONDON (AP) — An armed police officer assigned to protect the royal family accidentally fired his gun inside Buckingham Palace, Scotland Yard said Saturday. No one was injured. The police confirmed a report in the Sunday Express, which said the incident happened about 10 weeks ago near the private apartment of Queen Elizabeth II. The police statement did not give a date for the incident. "There was an accidental discharge of a firearm in the grounds of Buckingham Palace," a police spokesman was quoted as telling Press Association, the national news agency. "There were no injuries, and no members of the royal household were in the vicinity."

Peru's Shining Path leader captured

LIMA (R) — Peruvian authorities Sunday announced they had captured Abimael Guzman, shadowy leader of the Maoist Shining Path guerrillas who have waged a 12-year underground war against the state.

Mr. Guzman, 57, was detained Saturday night along with six other militants in a house in the capital's southern district of Surco, a spokesman for the National Counterterrorism Directorate (Dincote) said.

Seven other leaders were captured in another house in a nearby area, police sources said.

Mr. Guzman, who has rarely been seen in over a decade and is known by his nom de guerre "Presidente Gonzalo," led the "Sendero Luminoso" group in a bloody war against Peru's government.

More than 26,000 people have died in political violence since the group took up arms in 1980.

Police said Mr. Guzman was being held at the headquarters of the National Police in central Lima. He had been nearly captured on two other occasions, police sources said.

While Mr. Bush was getting all the attention, Mr. Clinton was closeted in the Arkansas governor's mansion, presumably on state business. But during the speech Mr. Clinton went jogging and later dismissed the address as "more of the same."

And he seemed to be avoiding reporters who had been questioning him to again explain how he received a draft deferment as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University 23 years ago, during the Vietnam War.

Republicans have made Clinton's draft record a major target in this campaign, with daily demands that he "come clean" on his record.

While Mr. Bush seems fired up and on the offensive, Mr. Clinton has appeared defensive, reacting to Mr. Bush's actions, such as doing out funds for hurricane Andrew victims in the southeastern states of Florida and

Louisiana and awarding defence contracts to industries and wheat subsidies in key states.

Mr. Bush has spent nearly every day campaigning outside Washington. Since former Secretary of State James Baker left his job to run the Bush White House and campaign, his speeches seem more coherent.

And there have been suggestions that Mr. Clinton has been campaigning in states that appear marginal rather than solidifying his support in big states crucial to the Nov. 3 election.

Not so, say Mr. Clinton's campaign staff.

Paul Begala, a Clinton campaign strategist, told Reuters that Mr. Clinton is carrying a message everywhere. This was after a Clinton speech in Vice President Dan Quayle's midwestern home state of Indiana, normally Republican territory.

"Here we are in Indiana," Mr. Begala said. "We are running a national campaign. Let George Bush retreat to only those states that are most likely to vote Republican."

And Mr. Begala played down criticism of a Clinton trip to a car

race in South Carolina, where he was booed in the heart of a deep south state Mr. Bush easily carried four years ago.

"The important thing is that he showed up and campaigned there," Mr. Begala said, adding all politicians get heckled at sports events. "We're not doing this just to win states. We're doing this to change America."

Since the Republican convention in August, Mr. Bush has made headway in the south, which native southerners Mr. Clinton and Sen. Gore had hoped to recapture from the Republicans.

One Atlanta-based political analyst, Whit Ayres, said Mr. Bush is "within one to five percentage points of capturing enough white voters to lock up the deep south, predicting that while Mr. Clinton will get the traditional Democratic black vote, the number of black voters is expected to be far lower than in 1988."

"The president is very close to what he needs to sew up the south," said Ayres at a meeting of southern governors.

Paintings of Peter The Great stolen in Estonia

MOSCOW (AP) — Thieves stole four paintings from the Peter The Great House-Museum in the Estonian capital of Tallinn, a news agency said. The robbers entered the house through a garret window and escaped with two portraits of the 18th-century Russian czar and two other paintings from the same period. ITAR-TASS reported. The four artworks are worth about 50,000 Estonian kroons, or \$4,500 at the current exchange rate, the agency said. Mare Kask, a staff member at the three-room museum where Peter The Great lived briefly in the early 1700s, said thieves took only the museum's most valuable paintings, leaving many other items untouched. The intruders set off an alarm as they left by the front door, but got away, she told ITAR-TASS. In addition to the two portraits of Czar Peter, the stolen canvases included an 18th-century portrait of Czarina Yelizaveta Petrovna and a painting of the crucified Christ by an unknown European artist of the 17th or 18th centuries. ITAR-TASS reported.

Armenian legislator killed in Karabakh

MOSCOW (R) — An Armenian legislator was killed in a rocket attack on Nagorno-Karabakh, where he was helping the disputed territory's fight for independence from Azerbaijan, the ITAR-TASS News Agency reported.

Samvel Shakhmuradyan, 37, was killed in the village of Vagush in the Marakert region of the predominantly Armenian territory, which has been waging a bloody battle for secession from Azerbaijan.

ITAR-TASS quoted the Armenian parliament press office as praising Mr. Shakhmuradyan for his work on free press laws and lobbying on behalf of Armenians

in Nagorno-Karabakh. He also organised the issuing of Armenia's first postage stamp as an independent country.

ITAR-TASS said he was the second Armenian legislator killed in Nagorno-Karabakh. The first, Vigen Shirinyan, was killed in January.

Officials in Nagorno-Karabakh, meanwhile, claimed that Azerbaijani forces were preparing another offensive on their territory, ITAR-TASS said. Fighting was reported across the region Friday and Saturday.

In Georgia, Abkhazian rebels ambushed Georgian soldiers guarding a railway Saturday, killing one trooper and wounding three, Georgian officials said.

There was no information on Abkhazian casualties in the 90-minute firefight.

The clash occurred at 5 a.m. (0100 GMT) near the city of Ochamchira in Abkhazia, a secessionist region of western Georgia, said a report from the Georgian command in the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi.

The Abkhazians, backed by Caucasian volunteers, were trying to blow up a railroad bridge near Ochamchira, the Georgian News Agency Iprinda Ltd. said.

In spite of this ceasefire violations, the situation in Abkhazia was reported to be mostly calm Saturday.

German official predicts rise in rightist violence

FRANKFURT (AP) — A state security official was quoted Saturday as predicting a dramatic rise in rightist violence in Germany, with more hate of foreigners and nationalism because of social turmoil in Europe.

Hamburg state security chief Ernst Uhrlau gave his assessment in a Spiegel magazine interview, as officials reported more overnight rampages against refugees, including a firebomb attack that injured two small children.

Mr. Uhrlau was quoted by the Hamburg-based weekly magazine as saying that neo-Nazi attacks against foreigners have taken on "terrorist dimensions," with reports of live ammunition fired at asylum shelters during recent neo-Nazi rampages.

Mr. Uhrlau, whose office is responsible for investigating radical groups, told Spiegel there have already been 970 violent rightist incidents this year, resulting in 700 injuries and 10 deaths.

Anthony Perkins, star of Psycho, dies of AIDS

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Anthony Perkins, who played the murderous motel keeper Norman Bates in the classic thriller Psycho, died Saturday of AIDS complications. He was 60.

Perkins died in the bedroom of his Hollywood home with his wife and sons at his side, said his publicist, Leslee Dart.

Earlier this week, Perkins put together a statement about his condition, Ms. Dart said.

"I chose not to go public about this because to misquote Casablanca, 'I'm not much at being noble but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of one old actor don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world,'" he said.

"There are many who believe that this disease is God's vengeance, but I believe it was sent to teach people how to love and understand and have compassion for each other. I have learned more about love, selflessness and human understanding from the people I have met in this great adventure in the world of AIDS than I ever did in the cutthroat, competitive world in which I spent my life."

Perkins, the son of stage and film actor Osgood Perkins, gained fame playing awkward, often neurotic young men. Later, his name became synonymous with horror films.

He broke into movies in 1953, appearing in The Actress with Spencer Tracy, Teresa Wright and Jean Simmons. He went on to make Friendly Persuasion in

1956 with Gary Cooper, which earned him an Oscar nomination for best supporting actor, and he co-starred with Gregory Peck and Fred Astaire in the acclaimed 1959 anti-war film, On The Beach.

But it was Psycho, director Alfred Hitchcock's classic 1960 horror film, that made Perkins — and his character Norman Bates — film legends. The movie proved so popular that the actor starred in three sequels, but none received the acclaim of the first.

"Norman appears on request," Perkins said in a 1989 interview. "I would even say on demand. I can dial my own personal 800 number and Norman will reply."

Bates played the owner of a lonely motel where vicious murders take place, including the stabbing of a character played by Janet Leigh. That murder scene, shot in a shower with quick flashes from many angles, is among the most famous in film history.

Among his other films, Perkins appeared in Winter Kills (1979), a black comedy about the younger half-brother of a slain U.S. president who goes into politics to find out the truth behind the murder and discovers a labyrinthine, long-hidden plot.

He also played a basketball player in the movie Tall Story, which starred Jane Fonda as a cheerleader.

Perkins is survived by his wife, Berry Berenson Perkins, his sons, Osgood Perkins, 18, and Elvis Perkins, 16, were pending.

1st U.N. observers arrive in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — A group of United Nations observers arrived Sunday to start monitoring chronic violence that threatens South Africa's reform efforts.

The U.N. observers, led by Ismat Steiner of Tanzania, will deploy throughout the country to work with local officials and a government-appointed judicial panel to try to stop violence.

Eighteen observers arrived Sunday, and the total mission eventually will comprise 50 people under U.N. official Angela King of Jamaica.